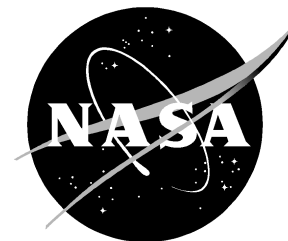


NewsRelease



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FIRST Robotics:

NASA Langley sponsors third annual competition in Richmond

After six weeks of intense design and construction of their own original robot, high school students nationwide, including Hampton, Norfolk and Virginia Beach, Va., will demonstrate their science, mathematics and technology skills in the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition.

Sponsored by NASA's Langley Research Center and Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Engineering, the third annual regional robotics competition will be held on March 7-9 at the Siegel Center in Richmond, Va. About 67 teams will compete for honors and recognition that reward design excellence, competitive play, sportsmanship and high-impact partnerships between schools, businesses and communities.

The NASA Langley event is the largest of 17 FIRST regional robotics competitions held nationwide, with Langley sponsorship of 21 teams. Again, Langley is working closely with a team from the New Horizons Regional Education Center in Hampton, Va.

NASA Langley's Jeff Seaton is playing a lead role again in this year's competition. He is supported by researchers from NASA Langley's Aerospace Systems, Concepts & Analysis Competency, Systems Engineering Competency, Aerodynamics, Aerothermodynamics, and Acoustics Competency, Office of the Chief Information Officer, and several retired NASA engineers and community volunteers. Seaton has worked with the FIRST program for the past six years.

"This program really is about changing lives. It is the first opportunity for many of these students to realize that math and science are actually practical 'even required,' to solve real-world problems," says Seaton. "Mentored by men and women who solve 'impossible' problems every day, in creating these robots, the students realize that they can do the 'impossible' as well."

Each year, FIRST develops the robotics competition by supplying a "problem" and a kit of parts to teams of students. Each team has just six weeks to organize, design, build, program and test its robot for competition. In this year's game, "Zone Zeal," robots are designed to collect soccer balls, put them into goals, then move those goals into specified zones in order to earn points – all in less than two minutes.

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Currently in its eleventh year, the FIRST Robotics Competition anticipates its largest season ever with more than 600 teams from as far away as Brazil, Canada, and the U.K. More than 15,000 students will compete in the various regionals to earn a spot at the Championship held April 25-27 at Walt Disney World's Epcot in Orlando, Fla.

FIRST is a non-profit organization established in 1989 by Dean Kamen, an entrepreneur and inventor with over 100 patents. FIRST's mission is to stimulate student interest in math and science. In 1992, FIRST began organizing a national robotics competition. The goal of the program is to match high school students with professional engineers and technicians from industry and academia to design, construct and operate the robots, inspiring them to pursue careers in mathematics, science, and engineering. The event has become known as the "super-bowl" of engineering and the "the ultimate mind sport."

Media Opportunity:

News media are invited to attend the competition. The competition will be broadcast via the Internet on **(Friday, March 8 and Saturday, March 9)** at <http://robots.larc.nasa.gov>. Interviews and b-roll of the competition will also be available. Interested media should call **Kimberly W. Land, 757-864-9885 or 757-344-6811/cell phone.**
